

From: hayward@slothmud.org@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 7:19am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I think the proposed settlement is a bad idea.

Microsoft keeps saying that they have competitors (namely Open Source Linux). But the settlement completey excludes them from using any of the information the settlement forces them to disclose.

Not only will open source projects not fit the guidelines of who Microsoft is forced to disclose the information too. The release of the protocols without the security information makes them completely useless because if you can't authenticate, you can't use the protocols!

Microsoft needs to be forced to open up their protocols and interchange formats to others in order to really level the playing field. The Microsoft Word document is one example. They have such a lock on the market of word processors just because they are the defacto standard.

Microsoft uses these formats to force their customers to upgrade office on an almost yearly basis. Most people I talk to upgrade office because they want to be able to read new word/excel documents - not because office provides any new amazing features that they really want.

Microsoft uses these formats as extortion to keep businesses and people upgrading their products. I know, because I'm a programmer, that Microsoft could create a new word document format that is still able to be opened with previous word processors. This is exactly how the HTML/XML formats work. But they choose to not do that.

Microsoft also uses changes in their word document format to keep other word processors from ever being able to compete with them. In the industry today, if you can't open a word document, your word processor is useless.

If you were to force Microsoft to open ALL protocols, formats (including word, excel, powerpoint, networking protocols, asf, windows media, etc formats) then you would go a great distance towards leveling the playing fields.

As a technical expert, looking at the current proposal is just disgusting. It's almost like you let Microsoft write it themselves!

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Brian Hayward

